



MAKING PLANS

Grades 5-8

Skills and Objectives:

- Students will use real-life problem-solving skills to choose a site for a new school.

Suggested Groupings:

Small groups

Getting Started:

1. Ask students how they think census information is used. Explain that the federal government, the government of the U.S. Virgin Islands, and businesses use census information on age, gender, language, housing, employment, income, and transportation to tailor services to a community's needs. This information is an integral part of the Virgin Islands' planning decisions.

- Tell students they will do a site-planning exercise by using census-style data and other factors to pick a new school site. Ask: **What factors would you consider in selecting a site for a new school?**

2. You may wish to do the following as a warm-up activity:

- Write these categories on the chalkboard:
 1. Children ages 6-12
 2. Adults ages 65+
 3. Households without cars

- Ask students to name the category or categories that would most affect plans for the following:

- A. A new bus route (2, 3)
- B. A new middle school (1)
- C. A new community center (1, 2, 3)

How might people of varying ages feel about the proposed plans? For example: How would adults 65 and older feel about a new school being built near them?

- 3. Discuss with students how information about characteristics other than age (such as employ-

Chalkboard Definitions

census tracts: small, relatively permanent areas within subdistricts that average 4,000 residents per tract.

statistics: a collection of numerical data.

constituent: a person represented by an elected official.

ment status) can help local governments serve their constituents. Offer an example, such as using census information on employment for developing a job training program.

Using the Activity Worksheets:

- Photocopy and distribute the Lesson 4 Activity Worksheets (pages 15 and 16) and introduce the lesson. Divide the class into small groups.

- Invite students to come up with their own examples of how census information might be used.

Wrapping Up:

- Have groups compare the sites they chose for a new school. Most groups probably chose Site B based on what is nearby (convenient transportation, residential housing, a large school-age population) and what is not nearby (industrial areas, a highway, other schools).

- You might wish to stage a town meeting to discuss students' site selections. At this meeting, add a cost consideration to the selection process. Propose to students that it will cost twice as much to build a school on Site B as it will to build on Site A or C. Building a school on Site B would mean raising taxes. Ask students to rethink their site selection with this in mind. **Would their decision remain the same? Why or why not?**

Extension Activity:

Have groups brainstorm about other planning decisions that could be made from the data in this lesson, for example, building a new playground or hospital.



Name: _____

Making Plans

One way that census data are gathered and organized is by census tracts. Census tracts are small areas within subdistricts that generally have between 1,500 and 8,000 residents, averaging 4,000 per tract. Local governments can use tract statistics to make decisions, such as which areas could use a new bus route, or which neighborhoods need more playgrounds.

What if you were a local government official? How would you use census-style data to make community planning decisions? Give it a try. A local school district has to decide where to build a middle school. The planning chart below helps you analyze each site. First, read the questions posed in the chart and enter your answers in the first column. Use the School Planning Map and the Census Table on page 16 to fill in the rest of the chart below. For each factor on the chart, rank the sites from 1 (best) to 3 (worst). Explain your reasoning for the ranks you choose. Then add up the rankings for each site to see which one comes out with the lowest total. That's your site!

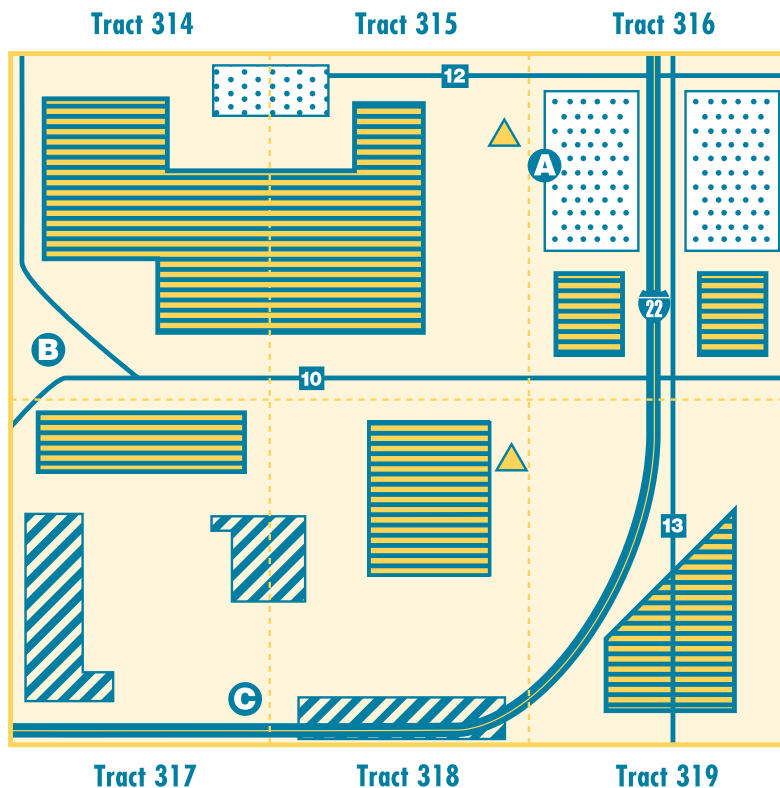
Planning Chart

FACTORS TO CONSIDER	ANSWER/EXPLANATION	SITE A	SITE B	SITE C
School-Age Populations What are the pros and cons of locating schools near census tracts with large school-age populations?				
Existing Schools How close together or far apart should schools be in areas with lots of children?				
Industrial Areas Factories can cause noise and air pollution. How might this affect a school?				
Transportation How will children get to school? Are there roads leading to the site, or will the community have to build new ones? Is it dangerous to put a school near a highway?				
Totals		_____	_____	_____



Name: _____

Making Plans (continued)

School Planning Map**Census Table**

TRACT	CHILDREN AGES 6-12
314	1,173
315	1,670
316	463
317	897
318	669
319	542

MAP KEY

- Existing Middle Schools
- Possible School Sites
- Industrial
- Shopping Area
- Residential
- Highway
- Road

● Which site did you choose? Explain why you picked this site.
